1:Du Bois E-S (1938-1939) 1944
OFS Alor OFS

Then came the time of the big cough (influenza epidemic of 1918). Mother told that since I could climb trees I should go with her and help her pick mangoes. On our way home mother carried the mangoes. She went up first into the house and came right back down. I followed her up and sat down next to Padualo's feet. Nobody told me he had died while we were away; I thought he was just lying there sleeping. I sat next to the dead man's feet eating a mango, which I hadn't peeled but was just biting into. Father came up and tugged my hand. I asked why and he said, "Didn't you see? Padualo is dead and you are sitting at a dead man's feet." I was afraid and went out with father. I sat on the verandah but father said, "Don't sit there. Go elsewhere. People are coming to bury Padualo." So I got down off the verandah and told people Padualo was dead. They all knew it. I told what had happened to me. Then I went and sat on Fankaliera's verandah, and people came to bury the dead man. When they were burying him, the dead man's wife, Tilamau, didn't look at the rattan as she was severing it (to free her soul from the dead spouse), so she missed it. Fankaliera said, "That woman's husband must went to follow her. She will soon be dead because she didn't cut the rope."

That night a great many people came to stay with Tilamau because her husband had just died. They were all crowded together, sleeping side by side. Tilamau suddenly went crazy. She looked around, saw an arrow, and began jabbing it into each sleeping mat. (The interpreter shivered at this point.) She drove the point into one mat and it went into Kawaimau's chest about half an inch. She also struck Maugbang's forehead and made a long wound. Everybody sat up and shouted; they thought an enemy had entered the house and was killing them. Then father and Aluriwami threw thatch on the fire. When it was light they saw that Tilamau's place was empty, but the door was still shut. They searched the house and saw Tilamau crouched under the eaves with the arrow. Aluriwami spoke nicely to her and coaxed her to come outside with him. When she started up the house ladder again, he snatched the ladder from under her, pulled it up, and shut the door. Then he called to all the village to shut their doors tightly and to guard them, that Tilamau was crazy and was loose outside. So she stayed out all night. In the morning Aluriwami called all the strong men of the village to come and tie up Tilamau. People said, "Let us make sure she is dead before we bury her." So they divined, and the banana middle sections fell so that the answer was "dead." They asked if she would be dead soon or not, and it fell on "soon." While they were divining she went up into the house. Aluriwami told Manifani and Padamai to fetch her.

1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alor OF5

next day, mother said, "You can't play with other people. If you want 154[x]
to play with people, ask them here; don't go to their houses." So Kolus and I played together, pounding earth between stones and making believe it was corn. We said our husbands had gone and we were cooking for their return. We played at that until midday and we were hungry, and then we went into the house to eat. Then we said our husbands were near and went back to play at cooking. We used leaves as plates and set up three stones as a tripod. When we had cooked, we said, "Oh, maybe our husbands are sleeping someplace. Perhaps we had better throw out this food and go to our houses." So we went home, and the next day we played the same game; we played at cooking for our husbands. Then we went to hunt for grasshoppers and brought them home and really cooked and ate them. We went back to play at cooking for our husbands. [These children actually knew how to cook, but in addition they also played at it.]

March 14, 1939

There is something I haven't told about the soldiers. When I was about four or five, they came to collect taxes. All who hadn't paid they K57
dragged to the government camp. They took my mother and Kolus, [492]
many of us. On the way my mother escaped and ran off to hide in the brush. Lethusi had already paid his taxes, but the soldiers had taken his wife, Matinglang, and his children. So he followed us and showed the soldiers his tax receipt. He said, "This is my wife and all these are my children." He pointed to me and Kawaimusi too. The soldiers said, "All right, you may take your wife and children, but the others must stay." So we started back to Atimelang. On the way we met mother, who had made four rice pots for us to eat on the trip and was bringing them to us. So we all went back together. Kolus was with us, and she cried and cried because they had carried off her mother. She cried a great deal. Then mother said, "I had better go fetch some corn so that Lethusi can take it to Kolus's mother." So she did and gave Lethusi corn to take to Kolung [the mother of Kolus]. Then the soldiers took her away. Many women and men too were taken. They took them to some place in Maisung and put them in a pigpen along with pigs for six days, and then they let them go. There were infants in arms too. They had only mangoes to eat.

When I was about six, a big sickness came [the influenza epidemic [731]
of 1918]. Many people died, one or two in each house. There were plenty of pigs for their feasts, but not enough corn. People fetched

2: DuBois E-5 (1938-1939) 1941 OF5 Alor OF5

ances that throughout Indonesia is the concept of man's creation from molded clay. In Atimelang this widespread motif is altered so that man is created from molded rice and corn meal; that is, man is made from food.

Also food, rather than native currencies, is generally considered adequate pay for labor. The guest-workers who help cultivate a large rice field, who assist in erecting a lineage house who attend memorial funeral ceremonies, or who participate in similar ceremonial activities are all fed in return for their participation. When cooperative groups are formed for work in fields, the host of the day must furnish the midday meal.

There are other attitudes toward food which are perhaps less dramatic and institutionalized, but just as telling. If women are pounding rice or corn, any kernel which falls from the mortar is carefully picked up. Children of five or six have already absorbed this attitude and are as meticulous as the adults of both sexes. A single bean left in a pod during shelling will be retrieved by children as well as adults. In clearing ground even isolated food plants will be carefully preserved. The meticulous fashion in which all food articles are saved and used does not coincide with any actual scarcity.

The natives also refer frequently to the annual "hungry period." This is the end of the dry season when there is no actual want but only less of the preferred foods. For a month or two natives depend more on cassava and sweet potatoes than on corn. Yet the culture phrases this as a period of food stress. In addition there were references to periods of famine as though they were an ever present threat. Careful inquiry revealed only two periods of shortage within the memories of people between forty and fifty. Both of these were due to factors which had disorganized the community so that for one season the fields had not been as extensively planted and as carefully weeded as is customary. There is no doubt that food, especially of the preferred sort, was scarce on these two occasions, but it was procurable by purchase in nearby communities and there is no evidence that anyone died of hunger. There is, in fact, no indication that hunger is ever necessary if a proper amount of foresight and industry has been exercised. Perhaps one of the best indications that the concern over food scarcity is of psychological origin and not realistic is that there is no land hunger. No one ever expresses poverty or wealth in terms of land, although there is actually great variation between consumption units in the number and fertility of fields owned. This is so despite a strong preoccupation with wealth as status in the culture. Data on the yield of the fields indicate that crops are good and on the whole adequate not only to feed the consumption units but also to provide surpluses for contributions to feasts.

In addition there is a singular agricultural fiction in Alor. This concerns the so-called "good years" and "rat years" which come in alternate seasons. Theory has it that there is no use planting rice fields or any outlying plots during "rat years" because rodents will eat up the crop before it can be harvested. In the "good years" there are supposed to be fewer rats and there is a chance to lay in surpluses for large feasts. The theory of alternating years of rat plagues has no basis in reality. Essentially the idea is a fiction that every other year you are the helpless victim of depredations on your food supply. As one might expect, there are